

A STUDY OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL CLIMATE:  
PERSPECTIVE FROM THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Dissertation

by

SHANTINA R. DIXON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2008

Major Subject: School Psychology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Cynthia Riccio
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## ABSTRACT

A Study of Parental Involvement and School Climate: Perspective from the Middle  
School. (August 2008)

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Cynthia Riccio

This study examines school level differences on different dimensions of teacher-rated parent involvement and school climate while adjusting for age, gender, ethnicity, how certified, and number of years teaching. Two hundred twenty-four elementary teachers from existing data and 178 teachers at the middle school level provided information on their perceptions of parent involvement and school climate. Elementary school teachers were recruited from districts located in Texas and California. Middle school teachers were recruited from suburban school districts located in Southeast and Southwest Texas. Teachers rated questions on the parent involvement and school climate surveys as either: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The nine research hypotheses generated for this study were partially supported by the data. As predicted, there was a difference between elementary and middle schools on how they perceive school climate. The data also supported the hypothesis that both Title I and non-Title I middle schools would find parent centers important for getting parents involved. Experience and school level also predicted how teachers perceived school climate. However, contrary to prediction, there were no significant differences between

elementary and middle school teachers on how they perceived parent involvement.

There also were no significant differences between elementary and middle school on the parent involvement scale when age, ethnicity, gender, school level, experience, and how certified were used as moderating variables. The same can be said for school climate when age, gender, ethnicity, and how certified were used as moderating variables.

Several questions were analyzed separately between Title I and non-Title I middle schools and there were no differences for Title I status. Overall, current results indicated similarities between elementary and middle teachers. Similarities also existed between Title I and non-Title I middle school teachers. Explanations, implications for practice, and future research are discussed.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father, Bobby Gene Lawrence and to the “Texas Dixons” (Nkrumah H.D. Dixon and Nia Sage Rayford Dixon). It is time to travel again!!!

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There are several acknowledgements that I would like to include with my dissertation. First, I would never have been able to accomplish this dissertation without the grace of God. God has spared me many times and my belief in the Lord Jesus Christ has kept me going. Secondly, I would like to give many thanks and kisses to my husband, Nkrumah H. D. Dixon, who had to endure a year of internship separation in order for me to finish my degree. Without your support my love, this year would have been unbearable. As for my lovely daughter Nia, life has so much more meaning with you. Being a mother to you is God's greatest gift to me (besides your father). Words cannot describe the gratitude I have for my mother. Without a second thought, she said "yes" to living with me in Houston while I did my internship. She assisted with Nia in any way possible. I love you mom "Granny-Ba" so very much. And to all of my other family members, my sisters (Betty Gibson and Elkisha Rayford) that encouraged me to keep going, and my nephew Dexter who succeeded anyway despite having to eat my husband's cooking for a year.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Current State of Education in the United States*

Engaging parents in the education of their children is no longer just a school issue. On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into effect the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (Office of the Press Secretary, 2002), which is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The NCLB requires that all children regardless of ethnicity and background receive a quality education. The major goals of the NCLB are: a) stronger accountability for results, b) more choices for parents and students, c) greater flexibility for states and school districts, and d) use of research-based instructional methods (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

In addition to these aforementioned goals, President Bush also has an agenda for high schools (U.S. Department of State, 2005). President Bush's high school agenda is written so that students not only graduate from high school, but are also prepared to enter college. The agenda states that on an international level, American high school students are falling behind in math and reading. Bush's agenda suggests four interventions that districts could use to ensure high school matriculation. One of these four suggested interventions includes, beginning at the middle school level, designing an intervention that will help students who are at risk for academic failure and dropout

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This dissertation follows the format for *The Journal of Special Education*.

(U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2007). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2004), 471,000 students dropped out of school in the 2000-2001 school year; student drop-out rates continue to grow while the job outlook for drop-outs continues to decline. The unemployment rate for dropouts in 1998 was 75% higher for dropouts than for students with a high school degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). Students who dropout from high school are more likely to be unemployed than those students who complete high school. Even more so, when dropouts are employed, they will most likely earn less than people with a high school degree. The median salary for students who dropped out of school in 2003 was \$12,184 and for students who did graduate from high school in 2003, the median salary was \$20,431 (USDE, 2006). Drop-outs are having a difficult time finding jobs that they want because employers are searching for personnel who are literate, technology savvy, and more educated. This leaves drop-outs to depend more on the government for welfare and food stamps, which ultimately contributes to a society of lower-class people (Asche, 1993) and costs tax payers money (Rumberger, 2001). Many factors are associated with students dropping out of school including: a) working more than 14 hours per week (Mann, 1986, 1987), b) lack of parental involvement, c) socioeconomic status, d) minority status (Horn, 1992), and e) pregnancy (Asche, 1993).

President Bush's goals (i.e., more choices for parents and students, intervention beginning in the middle school to help students who are at risk for academic failure and dropout) aligns with involving parents in the educational process at the middle school level. Research continues to show that children, whose parents are involved in their

education, obtain higher grades in math (Epstein, 2001; Galloway & Sheridan, 1994) and reading (Quigley, 2000), become involved in school activities, and complete more homework. Furthermore, when parents assist their children at home academically, students' grades and morale improve drastically (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Desforges & Alberto, 2003; Epstein, 1995a, 1987). In addition to NCLB, Title I, a federally funded program requires all schools that receive federal funding to collaborate with parents. If schools are found in noncompliance with programs like Title I, they could lose their federal funding (USDE, 2007).

#### *Statement of the Problem*

There is a significant shortage of parent participation at the secondary level that may negatively be affecting children's academic progress and high school completion (Epstein, 1987; Wandersman et al., 2002). Gone are the days when parents were actively involved in their children's education. Gone are the days when parents of all classes and ethnic backgrounds joined the Parent-Teacher Association in great numbers. Even more so, gone are the days when parents not only assisted with their own children's education, but the education of other neighborhood children. Changes in economy, neighborhoods, and school climate have changed the way that parents interact in their children's education (Davis, 1995). The lack of parental involvement and changing school climate has contributed to students in American schools falling behind other students on an international level (USDE, 2005).

Parents have a difficult time with their children's transition from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. One reason may be that the

academic coursework becomes more challenging for parents during the middle school and high school years; some parents have complained about not being able to assist their children with secondary curriculum. As the United States has increased academic standards, parents are often lost with today's curriculum. Another reason for the dwindling of parental involvement at the secondary level may be that adolescents prefer not having their parents as involved in their schooling. Peer-pressure from friends and the need to be in the "in" group may play a role in this line of thinking (Ogbu, 1991). Research shows that lower SES parents have a difficult time with in-school and out-of-school parental involvement. More instances of both parents working, more single-parent homes, lack of babysitters, parents not having time available for involvement, and no time due to employment are a few of the obstacles that are prohibiting lower income parents from school involvement (National Parent Teacher Association, 1998).

### *Significance of the Problem*

Children whose parents do not participate in their schooling do not benefit as well academically and socially as those children whose parents do participate (Christenson, 1995; Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Powell, 1989; USDE, 2005). Research shows that reading and mathematics skills increase at all levels of children's schooling when parents are involved (Epstein, 1995b). In addition, students have lower drop-out rates and better self-esteem, while teachers have better classroom management when parents are involved at their children's school. Parents also benefit from being involved at their children's school. When parents become involved at their children's school, they gain a better understanding of their children's school, they

improve the communication with their children, they have better access to needed services, and they improve their self-efficacy and sense of empowerment (Wandersman et al., 2002).

Children in the United States are lagging behind children in other countries in mathematics (Schoenfeld, 2002). Research shows that the academic gap between the children in the United States and other countries is steadily increasing. If this gap continues to widen, children in the United States will lose out on a variety of domestic and international opportunities. Children of the United States will no longer be able to hold their ground job wise. In a world of ever-changing technology and engineering, children of the United States need help in closing the academic gap. If this gap is to be decreased, not only should teachers and administrators assist in closing the gap, parents also need to help in anyway possible. Parent training workshops on school involvement and home tutoring could be encouraged by school districts so that parents could grasp how academics are forever changing the world. School districts also could hold parent training workshops that parents are to be encouraged to attend (USDE, 1997).

Children are continuing to drop out of school. According to the USDE (2006), 4 out of every 100 high school students dropped out of school between October 2002 and October 2003. While schools are still trying to figure out how to stop students from dropping out, dropouts are costing taxpayers billions of dollars each year. Dropouts are more likely to seek government assistance than students who earn a high school diploma. Adolescent females who drop out of school are more likely to become pregnant than students who do not drop out. Further, dropouts are more likely to go to

prison than those students who earn a high school diploma; dropouts make up 82% of the prison population (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Turlow, 1992).

### *Purpose of the Study*

The main channel of communication from the school to parents is often done through teachers. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether perceived parental involvement is correlated with school climate on both the elementary and middle school levels, with control for SES, age, ethnicity, gender, and type of teacher certification of the teacher. This research addresses parental involvement and school climate through the perspective of the teachers. It is anticipated that the findings from this research would assist schools with implementing parent involvement centers and its' activities along with ameliorating communication between parents and teachers. School psychologists are in a position to assist schools with facilitating communication with parents. School psychologists can assist schools with developing parent involvement policies that can increase parent involvement across school levels. Furthermore, school psychologists can consult with districts to improve communications to parents, develop school improvement teams, and assist schools with their overall climate.

### *Hypotheses/Research Questions*

1. Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of parental involvement at elementary and middle school levels?
  - It is hypothesized that there will not be a significant difference between elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of parent involvement.



1a. At the middle schools, what percent variance is accounted for by school characteristics (% minority, Title I versus non-Title I)?

- It is hypothesized that Title I middle schools with higher percent minority students will have lower ratings of parent involvement.

1b. Do teacher age, gender, certification, ethnicity, years of experience, and school level affect elementary and middle school teachers' perception of parental involvement?

- It is hypothesized that older, female, traditionally certified, more than 5 years of experience middle school teachers will rate parent involvement lower.

2. Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of school climate at the elementary and middle school levels?

- It is hypothesized that there will not be a significant difference between elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of school climate.

2a. For the middle schools, what percent variance is accounted for by school characteristics (% minority, Title I versus non-Title I)?

- It is hypothesized that Title I middle schools and schools with higher percent minority students will have lower ratings of school climate.

2b. Do teacher age, gender, certification, ethnicity, years of experience, and school level affect elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of school climate?

- It is hypothesized that older, female, traditionally certified, more than 5 years of experience middle school teachers will rate school climate lower.
3. Do teacher perceptions of school climate predict their perceptions of parent involvement at the elementary and middle school levels?
- It is hypothesized that teachers who believe that their school climate is positive will also rate parent involvement as positive.
4. Is there a significant difference between Title I middle school teachers and non-Title I middle school teachers with Item #16 of the parent involvement scale “I am comfortable with meeting parents from ethnic groups different from my own”?
- It is hypothesized that there will be a difference between Title I and non-Title I teachers with Item # 16 of the parent involvement scale. Title I school teachers will feel more comfortable with meeting parents from ethnic groups different from their own.
5. Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ on Item #15 of the parent involvement scale “Parent involvement is particularly important for students who are ethnically/culturally diverse”?
- It is hypothesized that there will be a difference between Title I middle schools and non-Title I middle schools with Item # 15 of the parent involvement scale. Title I middle schools will find parent involvement more important for ethnically/culturally diverse parents.

6. Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ on Item #17 of the parent involvement scale “Parent centers are important for getting parents involved at school”?
  - It is hypothesized that there will not be a difference between Title I and non-Title I middle schools. Both Title I and non-Title I middle schools will find parent centers important.
7. Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ on Item #18 of the parent involvement scale “I often (at least four times a month) telephone, e-mail, or send a letter home to all of my students’ parents”?
  - It is hypothesized that there will be a difference between Title I and non-Title I middle schools. Non-Title I middle schools will often telephone, e-mail, or send a letter home to all parents.
8. Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ on Item #19 of the school climate scale “The physical environment of this school is conducive to students’ learning”?
  - It is hypothesized that there will be a difference between Title I and non-Title I middle schools. Non-Title I middle schools will feel that their schools are conducive to students’ learning.
9. Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ on Item #20 of the school climate scale “There are often broken windows or doors in this school”?

- It is hypothesized that there will be a difference between Title I and non-Title I middle schools. Title I middle schools will feel that they have more broken windows or doors.

### *Definitions of Terms*

1. Parental Involvement- Participation by a child's mother and/or father, or legal guardian in a child's education.
2. Socio-Economic Status (SES)- Social and economic circumstances which are used to denote a ranking of individuals or groups in society.
3. School Climate or School Culture- The encompassing attitudes and beliefs, of those inside the school environment and outside the school, or the external environment.
4. Teachers' Perceptions- Insight or knowledge about school climate or parental involvement based on their specific experience.
5. Diversity- Differences among groups of people and individuals based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, language, exceptionalities, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic region in which they live ([www.ncate.org](http://www.ncate.org)).
6. Ethnicity- Racial status or distinctiveness.
7. Title I- a program that provides financial assistance through State Educational Agencies to Local Educational Agencies and schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards.

*Implications for Practice*

The goal of this paper is to facilitate communication between parents and school officials and to ameliorate the school climate in such a way to facilitate and encourage parent involvement. The first implication is to assist parents and schools with closing the gap of parent involvement between elementary and middle school. Parent involvement has a tendency to drop off after the elementary school years. The aim of this paper is to help school personnel identify obstacles to keeping parents involved during the middle school years and beyond. Parent involvement is still important at the secondary level for academic and social achievement and even more so to help students matriculate from high school. School psychologists are in a position to assist with facilitating communication between school officials and parents to keep parents involved in their children's schooling. The second implication is to assist schools in developing a welcoming climate for parents. The findings of this paper could assist school psychologists and other school officials by providing knowledge about teacher perceptions of parent involvement and school climate, thus, facilitating systemic change.

The third implication for practice is to assist in closing the gap between Title I and non-Title I schools pertaining to school climate and parent involvement. Title I schools can best be described as having a high percentage of poor children. Numerous research findings have cited SES as a moderating variable for academic achievement. At the same time academic achievement is positively correlated with parent involvement and school climate. The findings of this paper will assist in clarifying ways to close the achievement gap between these two types of schools. School psychologists are in a

position to assist school districts with improving and maintaining parent involvement despite school level and SES.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### *Parental Involvement and Achievement*

It is well established that parental involvement is correlated with school achievement of both children and adolescents (Long, 2007; Rich, 1987). Elementary school children gain greater academic, language, and social skills (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994), middle and high school students have greater achievement and future aspirations (Eccles & Harold, 1993) and spend more time doing and completing homework (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Research shows that parental involvement is more important to children's academic success than their family's socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or educational background (Amatea & West, 2007; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Parental involvement can encourage children's and adolescents' achievement in many ways. One way that parents can contribute positively to their children's education is to assist them with their academic work at home. Parents who read to their children, assist them with their homework, and provide tutoring using resources provided by teachers tend to do better in school than children whose parents do not assist their children (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Izzo et al., 1999). Additionally, in a study conducted by Callahan, Rademacher and Hildreth (1998) on twenty-six lower to middle-class "at-risk" sixth and seventh grade white students, students' mathematics scores increased when parents became involved with assisting them at home. In the Callahan et al. study,

parents were trained for a duration of ten weeks on how to implement home-based self-management and reinforcement strategies. Shaver and Walls (1998) conducted a similar parent training with seventy-four Title I students in second to eighth grade. Their study showed that regardless of gender or socioeconomic status of the child, parent involvement increased the scores of both mathematics and reading. Other parental involvement strategies that are said to assist children academically are for parents to have books, newspapers, and computers in their homes (Suizzo, 2007; Teachman, 1987). This is not to say that just because there are books and newspapers in the home that children will read them; children do, however, fare better with their reading when there are books and computers in the home.

Research shows that the level of parental involvement is associated with academic success. Children whose parents are actively involved in their schooling benefit better than children whose parents are passively involved. Specifically, if parents attend teacher conferences, accept phone calls from the school, and read and sign communications from the school, their children will benefit academically more than children whose parents do none of the above. Furthermore, children excel even more when their parents assist them at home with their homework, attend school sponsored events, and volunteer at their children's schools (Suizzo, 2007; Weisz, 1990).

Children's academic success also may be related to school-level parental involvement. Parental involvement can be defined as participation by a child's mother and/or father, or legal guardian in a child's education. Children who attend schools where there is a high level of parental involvement evidence greater achievement.



School-level parental involvement seems to benefit children and adolescents academically and behaviorally by promoting information sharing and control over children's behavior. Coleman (1990) asserted that children whose parents know each other promote school identification and success for their children. Broh (2000) also mentioned that students at school-level parental involvement schools were more likely to do their homework because completing their homework was considered the norm at these schools.

#### *Parental Involvement and High School Completion*

As previously stated, student dropout rates continue to be a concern. Willis (1986) many reasons that students drop out from high school: a) poverty level, b) academic performance, c) attitude towards school, d) school attendance, and e) family support. In recent years, researchers have found that parent involvement is associated with assisting students with matriculation. High school students whose parents are actively involved with their schooling have a higher rate of matriculation than those whose parents are passively involved. Moreover, students whose parents are involved in their schooling have higher aspirations for obtaining a bachelor's degree (Miedel, 2004; Trusty, 1999). Rumberger et al. (1990) found that parents of students who dropped out rarely attended their children's school functions or assisted their children with completing their homework. Additionally, these parents were least likely to punish their children for making poor grades.

Catsambis (2001) analyzed data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 and found that 12<sup>th</sup> grade students' success depended on the nature of

parental involvement and educational outcomes considered. Whereas parental involvement was not directly linked to achievement growth between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades, parental involvement indicators was linked to high levels of educational expectations, consistent encouragement, and actions that encourage children's learning. Parental involvement is pertinent on all grade levels and with all ethnicities. Research shows that parental involvement improves self-esteem and motivation of children. More importantly, parental involvement improves the basic academic skills of minority children and has a positive effect throughout their K-12 school years (Keith & Lichtman, 1994; Marcon, 1999; Overstreet, 2005), which ultimately may help with the middle school to high school transition. There is a higher level of parental involvement at the elementary level than at the secondary level (Ouimette et al., 2006; Reglin, 1993; Winters, 1993). Research has mainly focused on the elementary years. Literature shows benefits of having parents involved at every level, yet parental involvement drops off drastically after the elementary school years. This is thought to be because adolescents want to be independent during their secondary years and parents aren't able to assist them with their more challenging subjects. Although parental involvement and academic progress are positively correlated, maintaining minority parental involvement is oftentimes difficult (Ouimette et al., 2006; Reglin, 1993; Winters, 1993).

#### *Parental Involvement-System Level*

Parents, teachers, and administrators should be equally responsible for the education of children. If schools want to truly ensure academic success of children, schools need to make sure that all educational planning passes through parents first

(Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007; Seeley, 1992). According to the National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA), although parents often state that they would like to be more involved in their children's education, they complain that they feel left out of decision-making at their children's school (NPTA, 1998). Frankly, some school personnel are not comfortable with the idea of having parents involved in more than the traditional fundraisers. These personnel feel that as long as parents stick to traditional fundraiser events, everything else will be okay. Shatkin & Gershberg (2007) and Seeley (1992) found that parental involvement at some schools is seen as a power struggle. When teachers believe that they are the primary person to handle a child's education, then they create an unbalanced and unequal partnership. Nevertheless, at least theoretically, most teachers welcome the idea of parent involvement. According to a teachers' perceptions study published by the National Parent Involvement Network, 83% of teachers wanted an increase in parental involvement at their schools, and 95% of inner city teachers felt that parental involvement was lacking (Funkhouser, Gonzales, & Moles, 1997).

Many parental involvement strategies have been used in the past, but schools are still baffled by the lack of parental involvement at the secondary level (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Drake, 2000). Antiquated parental and family involvement strategies are often cited as a major problem in research. Schools that update their strategies to accommodate the characteristics of their community benefit more than those schools that only use a standard program (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Drake, 2000). Other problems may be that most parental involvement strategies are aimed at helping middle

class families (Crozier, 2001), focus mostly on elementary schools, and do not place much emphasis on minority families. The increased diversity of students and their families presents an even greater challenge to schools and teachers (Lewis, 1992; Wanders et al., 2007).

Teachers recognize the benefits of including parents, but consistently complain that parents do not assist in their children's education (Lewis, 1992). Administrators and educators should not assume that parents automatically know how to involve themselves at school or home. Parents need to be taught how to effectively involve themselves in their children's schooling. The assumption that every parent knows how to teach their children should be admonished. Parents are not teachers and need to be instructed on how to teach, assist, and encourage their children at home (Quigley, 2000). Ineffective instruction at home by a parent could hinder the academic progress of their children. The NPTA (1998) gave the following suggestions on how to involve parents: a) schools should host orientation sessions for parents on how to be involved, b) have an onsite family resource center, which will give parents access to materials on parenting, c) give parents handouts on curriculum information and teaching methods, d) encourage parents to volunteer in school and at school events, and e) invite parents to sit on committees to participate in school-decision making.

Likewise, it should not be assumed that teachers automatically know how to effectively involve parents in the classroom and at home. Epstein (1985) pointed out that the majority of teachers have little to no training on how to involve parents in the classroom. Therefore, most teachers lack necessary skills and knowledge on how to

effectively work with parents. Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) found that teachers need guidance from school administrators and consultants such as school psychologists to communicate with parents. In-services and workshops could provide guidance on how to effectively engage parents. Parent engagement is important on all levels of school involvement; however, sometimes schools are confused on what is considered parent engagement or involvement.

School administrators and teachers feel that parental involvement is important for the academic success of children, but sometimes the definition of what constitutes parent involvement is often misconstrued between parents and teachers. According to Epstein et al. (2002), there are six types of involvement: a) parenting- assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level; b) communicating- communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications; c) volunteering- improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs; d) learning at home- involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions; e) decision-making- include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations; and f) collaborating with the community- coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide

services to the community. Schools play an important role in assisting parents with the aforementioned strategies. When these strategies along with parents feeling welcome are in effect, children thrive academically and socially. If parents do not feel welcome at their child's school, they are less likely to be involved (Berla, 1992; Constantino, 2003).

#### *Parent Involvement and School Policy*

*Zero Tolerance.* A constructive way that school personnel could involve parents is to involve them in school policy issues. School policies such as Zero Tolerance, for example, could benefit from parent feedback and parent support. Initially, Zero Tolerance policies were set up in 1989 in three school districts (California, Kentucky, and New York) to punish students for drugs, fighting, and gang related activities. In 1993, schools across the country adopted the policy and eventually added smoking and school disruption to the policy (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Zero Tolerance arose in response to the increase in violent interactions in some schools; murder, murder-suicides, sexual assaults, and other violent crimes have increased in the media and concern for safety on school campuses has increased (National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), 2001). Urban schools and low income schools have seen an even greater increase in the adoption and implementation of Zero Tolerance policies with current Zero Tolerance policies targeting any behavior the district deems punishable. Schools that follow "Zero Tolerance" policies by suspending and expelling students for minor reasons are at a greater risk for having students dropout (Skiba & Rausch, 2006).

The prompt to develop and strengthen zero tolerance policies have not gone unnoticed by mental health professionals and researchers. NASP has reviewed these

zero tolerance policies and has condemned them to anyone who would listen. NASP (2001) disagrees with this policy because students who are often suspended or expelled because of the Zero Tolerance policies often drop out of school or become part of discriminatory practices. Ensuring that parents are a part of policy making decisions with Zero Tolerance policies and other pertinent school policies will help to keep students in school. When parents are a part of important school decision-making policies, they feel more of an ownership in maintaining the policy. When parents feel included, school climate improves and in turn, student's achievement improves. Besides involving parents in school policies such as Zero Tolerance, obstacles prohibiting parents from becoming involved must first be fixed. Recently, numerous research findings show that students who have been retained in the ninth grade also are at a higher rate for dropping out of school.

*Grade Retention.* Another policy issue that should be discussed with parents is that of grade retention versus social promotion. Recently, research findings show students who have been retained in the ninth grade also are at a higher rate for dropping out of school (Gewertz, 2007). Research shows that students transitioning from middle school to high school to only get retained in the ninth grade are more likely to feel like an outcast. Most of these failing students view high school completion as an unattainable goal. Some feel that if they cannot complete ninth grade, then they definitely cannot complete the following grades. Supportive staff and faculty at middle and high schools geared towards assisting students at-risk of failing the ninth grade could definitely assist in stopping students from dropping out of school. Making parents

aware of transitional issues for ninth graders could also assist in keeping students on track. Schools could offer parents informational workshops or handouts at open house meetings on how to assist their children with the first year of high school (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Mac Iver, 1990).

Schools that have effective transition programs include parents when transitioning students (Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994). Schools can start the transition process by providing information about the new school to the student and the parent. Schools can do this through tours of the school, small-group sessions with counselors, and newsletters and websites that provide information to parents and students. Schools can further include parents with transitioning by using existing 9<sup>th</sup> grade parents to serve as ambassadors for providing information to new 9<sup>th</sup> grade parents (Paulson, 1994).

#### *Parental Involvement-Parent Level*

Wandersman et al. (2002) found that parents of all ethnic and diverse backgrounds want to participate and feel that it is important to participate in their children's education. Although research shows that some parents are becoming more educated and want to do more than the traditional fundraiser, there are some parents who do not participate at all. Mostly, parents who do not participate at all in their children's schooling come from the lower socioeconomic class and ethnic minority groups (Constantino, 2003). Although the Census Bureau (U.S. Census, 2001) found a decrease in the white non-Hispanic population from 76% to 72% and an increase in the Hispanic population from 9% to 13% and the Black population from 12.3% to 12.9% (Constantino, 2003), parental involvement strategies still derive from the majority



culture. Davies (1987) proposed that the majority of parental involvement strategies are biased towards the middle-class parent. Kaplan, Liu, and Kaplan (2000) found that parents are more likely to participate when they can communicate with same class personnel. Moles (1987) reinforced the idea of parents being comfortable with others from socioeconomic backgrounds similar to their own by portraying the typical involved parent as being female, white, high-income, and college-educated. Furthermore, Ingram et al. (2007) and Ramsburg (1998) found that parents who view education as part of parenting will be more involved than parents who do not view education as part of their role as parents.

#### *Parent Involvement and Socioeconomic Status*

Parent involvement varies from school to school with lower income schools having a difficult time getting parents involved, especially at the secondary level. The NPTA (1998) cited three reasons for parents not participating: a) a lack of time due to employment, b) parents not making themselves available for involvement, and c) inability to obtain a babysitter. In a survey completed by the NPTA (1998), 52% of the parents polled reported that “time constraints” was the main reason for not participating at their children’s school; however, 91% of the parents agreed that parental involvement was important for academic success. Other studies have found similar responses relating to time and employment (e.g., Collins et al, 1995). Other reasons that parents don’t get involved with their children’s school include language barriers and previous horrible school experiences (Delgado, 2007; Finders & Lewis, 1994). With this in mind,

Robertson (1998) reported that one way schools can accommodate day working parents is to hold night events.

Antiquated methods of involving parents also play a role in how parents become involved at their children's school. Epstein (1982) found that while schools used traditional methods of involving parents such as having parents volunteer in the classroom, they rarely used other methods that might work for increasing parental involvement. Methods better preferred by Epstein (1995b) are as follow: (a) help parents increase their child development knowledge; (b) encourage different types of parent involvement; (c) reach out to families through home visits, informal meeting settings, and written correspondence that the parent can understand; (d) communicate with parents using a variety of methods so that they could be kept abreast of their child's progress; (e) accommodate parents work schedules when hosting school projects; (f) ensure school staff and faculty are accessible to parents; (g) reach out to families whose first language isn't English by learning about their culture; (h) begin building relationships with parents at the opening conferences of the school year and continue this relationship by making parents comfortable at other teacher-parent conferences; (i) make parents comfortable by allowing them to visit the classroom and give feedback; (j) parent centers also should be established as a way for parents to gain knowledge; and (k) write a school policy statement that ensures a positive school climate for family involvement.

### *Parent Involvement and Parental Skill Level*

At the secondary level, another reason why parents tend to drop off involvement is that the curriculum is more difficult and the students are wanting to be more independent (Collins et al., 1995; Ross, 2006). Some parents reported that they can no longer assist their children with completing their homework assignments due to their own skill limitations. Ballen and Moles (1994) countered this by advising that if parents monitor their children's homework they can assist them with matriculation. Furthermore, helping secondary students make postsecondary decisions and assisting them to select courses that will support their postsecondary plans is also good. Also, parents should not forget to regularly correspond with their children's school by contacting teachers, and reading and signing correspondence sent to them. The positives for being involved at the secondary level outweigh all the negatives of not being involved at all; while parents cited reasons that they could no longer assist secondary level children, research shows that any level of participation is better than none.

### *Parental Involvement and Ethnicity*

Teachers and school administrators need to appreciate the customs and beliefs of culturally and linguistically diverse parents if they truly want them to be involved in their children's schooling (Wandersman et al., 2002). Parental involvement has long been associated with increased academic achievement; it also has been correlated with a decrease in minority dropouts (Rumberger et al., 1990). Recently, literature has given even more power to parents by stating that parents play a major role in assisting their children with matriculation (Vaden-Kiernan & McManus, 2002-2003). Literature also

has shown that teacher's perceptions of minorities also play a role in minority children matriculating. Teachers must first reflect on their own values and attitudes and see if their attitudes are keeping them from developing a positive relationship with minority parents (Espinosa, 1995; Weaver, 2005). A strong partnership between teachers and minority parents contributes tremendously to minority children's matriculation (Espinosa, 1995). Hispanics and African-Americans were more likely to dropout than Caucasians; the Hispanic dropout rate for the year 2003 was 23.5% and the African-American rate was 10.9%, while the dropout rate for Caucasians was 6.3% for the same year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Steele (1992) found that the school achievement and retention rate gaps between African-American and Caucasian students have been persistent throughout history. If minorities continue to dropout of school, they will continue to make less, depend on the federal government for assistance, and have less positive outcomes overall.

Epstein (1990) found that parents from all ethnicities care about the education of their children, yet parent involvement is often low for minority parents. The problem isn't that minority parents aren't interested in their children's education; rather, they are unsure of what schools expect from them and how they might contribute at their children's school. It is a lack of knowledge on how to participate that leads to low levels of minority parent involvement (Epstein, 1990). Sometimes barriers and stereotypes exist that prohibit parental involvement of minority parents (Moosa, Karabenick, & Adams, 2001; Reglin, 1993).

In an Arab-American study conducted by Moosa et al., they found that oftentimes teachers thought that Arab parents did not want to be a part of their parental involvement process, which usually entailed parents going to a parent training workshop. When polled, it was found that parents simply were not comfortable with the traditional parent training workshop. Instead, they preferred a one-on-one parent training workshop with the teacher. Arab-American parents felt uncomfortable because of their language proficiency, which they felt would be called into question in a larger setting. Similarly, one reason for why parents tend to drop off involvement at the secondary level identified by Collins et al. (1995) included the increased number of teachers to deal with and language barriers.

African-American parents also have a hard time with involving themselves with their children's schooling (Koonce & Harper, 2005). Unlike the language barrier of Arab parents, some African-American parents find it difficult to trust their children's school. Horrible childhood experiences of their own, continuous pessimism from teachers, and feelings of helplessness have led some African-American parents to not trust their children's school (Brandon, 2007; Reglin, 1993). Furthermore, African-American parents complain that they do not feel welcome at their child's school (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Nevertheless, involving African-American parents in their child's school is an important factor for academic progress. When African-American parents are academically involved in their children's schooling, behavior problems decrease and academic achievement increase (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Cultural and language differences hinder Hispanic parental involvement at schools; parents who do not speak English in their homes are least likely to participate in activities at their children's schools (USDE, 1997). Espinosa (1995) argued that successful involvement of Hispanic parents begins with understanding their culture and values. Failure to understand Hispanic parents' values and culture may lead to negative outcomes for schools and students. For instance, Hispanic parents prefer face-to-face communication versus handwritten notes sent home by teachers. Additionally, American teachers traditionally prefer a structured parent conference, whereas Hispanic parents prefer a more relaxed conference setting. Failure to recognize simple cultural values could hinder the academic success of the Hispanic child and the involvement of the Hispanic parent (Inger, 1992).

Martinez and Velazquez (2000) found that engaging migrant families in the school process is an added challenge to schools. Children of migrant workers have greater risks of failing in school than the non-transient child. To effectively involve migrant parents, schools should first understand their background and cultural beliefs, and then base involvement strategies around these beliefs. School activities that may assist with involving migrant workers may include providing transportation, refreshments at school activities, and evening and weekend events (Inger, 1992).

#### *School Climate and High School Completion*

School culture and school climate are sometimes used interchangeably. School climate can be defined as the effect the school environment has on the student. Nurturing schools where children are guided and assisted or authoritarian schools where

discipline and rule governing take precedence fall under the school climate definition. School culture can best be defined as the way teachers and administrators relate to one another and to parents and students (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2006). High school completion and school climate have been correlated by researchers; research shows that students are least likely to dropout of schools where they feel safe and supported. Schools that implement family involvement programs where both students and parents have a “say” in what goes into their programs further benefit from higher matriculation rates (Asche, 1993). Additionally, students are more likely to matriculate when schools are smaller (Bowditch, 1993), have supportive faculty, and enforce programs of tolerance for cultural diversity (Asche, 1993). Safe schools have been deemed necessary by many education advocates (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Yell & Rozalski, 2000). Safe schools assist students with not only feeling protected, but also help students to graduate. Students who are tormented, teased, and harassed at school have a harder time matriculating than those students who are not bullied.

When students positively interact with supportive teachers, they are more likely to remain in school (Christenson, 2002). Additionally, when students respect their teachers and administrators, they are even more likely to remain in school. When schools engage students in school and learning they contribute to student matriculation. Furthermore, when teachers assist students to connect with their schools, students are more likely to have a sense of belonging at school. Schools can assist students to engage by helping them academically, behaviorally, cognitively, and psychologically

(Christenson, 2002). Teachers and administrators who provide opportunities for academic success for students assist them with their confidence (Mc Partland, 1994). Praising students for their efforts instead of correctness on assignments builds self-efficacy in students. Assisting students with their personal problems by providing insight and follow-up resources also contribute to their engagement at school. These types of support could be provided by school psychologists, school counselors, teachers, or administrators.

### *School Climate and Achievement*

School climate and achievement have been correlated by several researchers (Berk told, Geis, & Kaufman, 1998; Shortt & Thayer, 1998-1999). When students feel nurtured and well assisted they fare better with their educational endeavors. Furthermore, Shortt and Thayer (1998, 1999) mentioned that “when time is used well in schools, the climate of the school improves and the opportunity for learning increases” (p.78). In a study conducted on dropouts by the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, 77% of dropouts reported school-related problems; of the school-related problems, 46% reported not liking school, 39% reported failing school, and 29% reported not getting along with teachers (Berk told, Geis, & Kaufman, 1998). Students achieve lower when they do not feel supported by their teachers. Esposito (1999) found that when teachers and students are comfortable with each other, students’ adjusted better to school. Steele (1997) found that when teachers have an optimistic student-teacher relationship, African-American students did better with their academics.



Additionally, when school was viewed as favorable place, students' social skills and reading and mathematics scores improved.

Several ways for enhancing school climate have been given by researchers. One way that school climate can be enhanced is for schools to include block scheduling. Block scheduling can be defined as being either A-B or 4X4. Students who are on an A-B schedule tend to meet every other day for the entire school year on a 90 minute schedule; whereas, students on the 4X4 schedule meet every other day for one school semester. Shortt and Thayer (1998, 1999) found that block scheduling improved school climate and achievement by meeting the needs of students who were at risk academically. Teachers were able to spend more time assisting and meeting the needs of students who were at risk academically in block schedule classes than in regular 50-60 minute classes. While block scheduling has many advantages for students there are still a few challenges to block scheduling for the teacher. Teachers need adequate training on how to utilize their time using block scheduling (Irmsher, 1996). Teachers may need training in cooperative learning, class building, and team formation. One way to make block scheduling work for teachers is to involve parents in the process. Parents should be allowed to visit schools that have block schedules to give their input on how to make the program successful (Irmsher, 1996). Meetings held for parents and community members would also help to keep block scheduling successful. Parents are an essential part of helping to keep children in schools. Staff and faculty should ensure that their school climate is accepting in order to keep parents wanting to provide assistance at their schools.

### *School Climate and the Physical Environment*

Oftentimes, the school climate at schools is somewhat aloof if not downright awkward (Tharp, 2006). When entering schools, there often are signs that read firearms are prohibited, no trespassing, sign in at the office, or even violators will be prosecuted. Constantino (2003) viewed this language as unwelcoming to any parent regardless of income level. Rarely do parents see welcoming signs in their children's schools. Constantino suggested that schools need to change their signs from being so unwelcoming to "Welcome! Please sign in. A Family Friendly School: Where our community supports academic achievement for all students" (p.68). Unwelcoming school signs along with decrepit school buildings have made parents feel uncomfortable and unwelcome at their children's schools.

Research shows that parents are concerned about the physical conditions of their children's schools (Coulson, 2004). Inner cities and small rural areas are at a greater risk of having schools in poor condition. Parents have every right to be concerned about schools in poor condition because students at these schools score lower on achievement tests. Additionally, research shows that the quality of teachers and teachers' morale also is low at schools in poor condition. When schools are in horrid condition, teachers' and students' attitudes towards teaching and learning are also low (Glass & Gursky, 1997).

### *Parent Involvement and School Climate*

Research shows that a strong connection exists between parent involvement and school climate (Azzam, 2007; Henderson & Berla, 1994). When parent involvement and school climate are aligned, students succeed academically, attendance improves, and

matriculation rates increase. However, when the school climate at a school isn't welcoming, parents may not become involved. When schools make positive efforts in involving parents from diverse backgrounds, they create a relationship that will in the end be effective for the child, parent, and the school (Brown & Medway, 2007; Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Research shows strategies for creating a positive school climate that can facilitate family partnerships. Parents' negative views of schools change when schools try to reach out to them. Schools can do this by sending positive phone calls, e-mails, or letters to the home (Epstein, 1995a). By sending positive messages home to parents, schools send a message to parents that they are on their side. Parents are more likely to become involved at schools where they feel wanted and comfortable. Furthermore, parents feel valued when schools show enthusiasm and understanding towards working with families from diverse backgrounds.

Parents also feel valued and accepted when schools try to create a climate of inclusiveness. Involving parents on school governance and policy building teams, create a feeling of acceptance by parents. Davies (1991) suggested strategies for involving families by creating: (a) parent centers, (b) home visitor programs, and (c) action research teams which examine strategies for involving parents. These three strategies can help schools create a home-school collaboration. Schools can further create relationships with parents by using school psychologists to develop parent-teacher partnerships. Developing partnerships or relationships with parents is essential in creating a positive school climate.

Unfortunately, many schools are not organized in ways to foster parent relationships. Time management, training, along with school policies and structures prohibit some teachers from working collaboratively with parents. Unless parents and teachers make time to communicate wants and needs to each other, positive relationships may never develop. State testing and requirements have decreased time availability by teachers (Minke, 2006). Frequently, teachers' conference periods are used to gather relevant state mandated materials for activities in class. Likewise, working parents are limited in their time to meet with teachers. Often, low-income parents don't have the luxury of taking off from work like middle to high income parents. Unless parents and teachers find time to meet, positive relationships may never develop.

Many teachers also need assistance on how to interact with parents (Epstein, 1985). Diverse cultures, views, and socioeconomic levels challenge teachers with getting parents involved. In a society where views are constantly changing, teachers need someone to assist them with working with parents from diverse backgrounds. Teachers need training on how to communicate effectively without becoming argumentative when they don't agree with parents. School psychologists are in a position to consult with teachers and parents on how to effectively communicate their wants and needs (Kessler-Sklar and Baker, 2000).

School policies and structures often play a major role in how parents become involved (Minke, 2006). Schools should consider writing policies that ensures positive school climates for parent involvement (Epstein, 1994). School policies should foster statements in written correspondence that make parents feel included. School structures

that aren't welcoming also play a major role in making parents feel welcome (Constantino, 2003). Broken windows and doors at schools foster alienation instead of helping to build relationships with parents. When schools rectify outdated policies, structures, and strategies for involving parents, can they truly succeed in helping children academically.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY

Teachers often are the primary communicators between parents and schools. The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers view parent involvement and school climate. There are several questions that are intended to be answered with this research. The questions are listed in Chapter I.

This study used a quantitative analog approach. A cross-sectional survey design was used to explore teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and school climate in the middle schools. This procedure allowed a larger number of teachers to be surveyed as opposed to using a qualitative method.

#### *Participants*

Existing data was used from five elementary sites collected by the Teacher's Perceptions research team. Data collected were from four elementary sites located in Texas and one site located in California. Data were not broken down by individual school, only by the district in which they were collected. Of the 224 elementary teachers who participated in the study, 206 (92%) were regular education teachers and 18 (8%) were special education teachers. Of these, 210 (93.8%) were females and 14 (6.3%) were males; 133 were white (59.4%), 80 were Hispanic (35.7%), 6 were Black (2.7%), 2 were Asian (.9%), 1 was Biracial (.4%), and 1 was other (.4%). The majority (198; 88.4%) was certified as teachers through traditional programs; 26 (11.6%) teachers were certified through alternative routes. Teachers ranged in ages from 22 to 68 ( $M=40.80$

years,  $SD=9.87$ ). Number of years teaching ranged from 1 year to 40 years ( $M=13.68$ ,  $SD=9.23$ ).

In addition to the existing sample used for this study, middle school teachers were recruited to complete the same packet of information that had been previously collected at the elementary level. Data collected at the middle school level were from four middle schools located in Texas (See Table 1). Two middle schools were categorized as Title I middle schools at the time of this study and the other two schools were categorized as non-Title I. Of the 178 middle school teachers who participated in this study, 103 were White (57.9%), 52 were African-American (29.2%), 7 were Hispanic (3.9%), 5 were Asian (2.8%), 5 were classified as other (2.8%), 3 were biracial (1.7%), and 1 was Native American (.6%). Of these 138 were female (77.5%) and 40 were male (22.5%). Their ages ranged from 22-61 years of age. The education level of the teachers included 2 (1.1%) who were enrolled in a bachelor's program, 92 (51.7%) who had completed bachelor's degree, 26 (14.6%) who had 15-30 hours of additional coursework, and 57 (32.0%) who had completed a master's degree. Of these 178 middle school teachers, 151 were regular education teachers (84.8%), 25 were special education teachers (14%), and 1 was classified as other (.6%). One hundred twelve teachers (62.9%) were certified via the traditional route (enrolling in a bachelor's degree program for education) and 64 (36.0%) were certified through alternative methods. Teacher experience and training related to children from diverse backgrounds varied (See Table 2).

### *Instruments*

The packet included an information sheet (Appendix A), personal demographic data questionnaire (Appendix B), parental involvement questionnaire (Appendix C), and a school climate questionnaire (Appendix D). The personal data questionnaire included questions such as gender, ethnicity, age, current educational level, and grade taught. The personal data questionnaire also included questions such as years of experience as a teacher and level of training in diversity.

Table 1

*Middle School Demographics by School (Frequency/Percent)*

<b>School</b>	<b>A Elem.</b>	<b>B Elem.</b>	<b>C Elem.</b>	<b>D Elem.</b>
<b>Number of</b>	643	1,107	819	682
<b>Students</b>				
<b>Grades in</b>	7-8	6	7-8	7-8
<b>School</b>				
<b>Ethnic</b>				
<b>Distribution:</b>				
<b>African</b>	96	313	414	98
<b>American</b>	14.9%	28.3%	50.5%	14.4%
<b>Hispanic</b>	86	699	363	85
	13.4%	63.1%	44.3%	12.5%
<b>White</b>	400	81	28	444
	62.2%	7.3%	3.4%	65.1%



Table 1 Continued

<b>School</b>	<b>A Elem.</b>	<b>B Elem.</b>	<b>C Elem.</b>	<b>D Elem.</b>
<b>Native American</b>	1	0	0	0
	0.2%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Asian/Pacific</b>	60	14	14	55
<b>Islander</b>	9.3%	1.3%	1.7%	8.1%
<b>Economically</b>	180	803	569	162
<b>Disadvantaged</b>	28.0%	72.5%	69.5%	23.8%
<b>Limited English Proficient (LEP)</b>	23	208	62	21
	3.6%	18.8%	7.6%	3.1%
<b>At-Risk</b>	191	604	419	221
	29.7%	54.6%	51.2%	32.4%

Table 2

*Middle School Teacher Demographics*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	138	77.5
Male	40	22.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	103	57.9
African American	52	29.2

Table 2 Continued

<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Hispanic	7	3.9
Biracial	3	1.7
Native American	1	0.6
Other	5	2.8
<b>Education Level</b>		
Enrolled in Bachelor's	2	1.1
Master's Degree	57	32.0
<b>Employment Type</b>		
Student Teacher	0	0
Regular Education	151	84.8
Teacher		
Special Education	0	0
Teacher		
Other	1	.6
<b>Certification Route</b>		
Traditional Certification	112	62.9
Alternative Certification	64	36.0
Did not Respond	2	1.1
<b>Experience in working with diversity</b>		
Minimal to None	4	2.2
Some	46	25.8
Much	70	39.3
Extensive	58	32.6

Table 2 Continued

Item	Frequency	Percent
<b>Training in working with diversity</b>		
Minimal to None	14	7.9
Some	83	46.6
Much	59	33.1
Extensive	20	11.2
<b>Experience in working with children with special needs</b>		
Minimal to none	21	11.8
Some	64	36.0
Much	60	33.7
Extensive	32	18.0
<b>Training in working with children with special needs</b>		
Minimal to None	25	14.0
Some	88	49.4
Much	43	24.2
Extensive	21	11.8

*Parental Involvement.* The parental involvement survey contained questions such as “I feel comfortable with parent volunteers assisting me in my classroom”, “parent involvement is important for effective discipline”, and “I am comfortable with meeting parents from ethnic groups different from my own” (see Appendix C). This

measure was used as part of a larger study. It was created by the researcher after reviewing several other measures (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). The measure was further reviewed by two faculty members and two doctoral students. Internal consistency of the measure was determined by using split-half reliability (Cronbach's Alpha=.705) for the elementary sample. The Parental Involvement survey was modified for the middle school with the addition of two items based on faculty recommendations. *School Climate*. The school climate survey contains questions such as the morale of the staff is generally high, teachers respect parents, and teachers take students concerns seriously (see Appendix D). This measure was used as part of a larger study. It was developed by Rollins (2005) after reviewing similar measures from other studies (Haynes, 1996; Hood and Lovette, 2002; Kuperminc et. al., 1997; & Kuperminc et. al., 2001; Paredes, 1993). The measure was then reviewed by two faculty members and two doctoral students. Internal consistency of the measure was determined by using split-half reliability (Cronbach's Alpha=.887) for the elementary sample. The School Climate survey was modified for the middle school with the addition of two items based on faculty recommendations.

### *Procedure*

There were two school districts chosen for this study with two middle schools from each district. The schools chosen constitute a sample of convenience. The school sites were identified by the size and certain other non-identifying demographic information. All four schools are considered to be suburban with the number of students ranging from 643 to 1107. The teachers constitute a sample of convenience with

permission for participation first determined at the district level, then at the individual school levels, and then at the individual teacher level. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. All teachers attending the faculty meeting were given the opportunity to complete the survey.

The demographic data questionnaire, parent involvement survey, and school climate survey were previously reviewed by one faculty member and three graduate students to determine the reliability of the questionnaires. The review of the surveys resulted in the revision of certain statements and the proposal of methods to be used in the schools. Based on the piloting, it was estimated that the completion time for the packets was approximately ten to fifteen minutes. Each participant received an information sheet, demographic data sheet, parent involvement survey, and a school climate survey in an envelope. The envelope was used in order to ensure anonymity.

The researcher's dissertation proposal was given to each district's research review team in order to obtain permission. Once district permission was obtained, the individual principals were contacted via telephone to verbally obtain permission and set a date for the researcher to visit a faculty meeting. Once district and individual principal permission was obtained, the packets were passed out at school faculty meetings, completed, and collected on the same day. The teachers were asked to read the information sheet before completing the surveys. Once the surveys were completed, they were placed in the envelopes and collected by the researcher. In order to ensure return of the packets, all were collected upon completion on site. Once all packets were collected, the researcher thanked the principals and teachers and left the information

sheet that contained contact information for the researcher and the researcher's chairperson should questions or concerns arise at a later date. Results are presented in Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether perceived parental involvement was correlated with school climate on both the elementary and middle school levels, with control for SES, age, ethnicity, gender, and type of teacher certification of the teacher. This research addresses parental involvement and school climate through the perspective of teachers. Results of the data analysis are provided in this chapter. Summary results for the parent involvement and school climate surveys are presented first, and then analyses by research question are presented on the nine questions following each scenario.

#### *Survey Results*

Parent involvement and school climate survey results are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Composite scores excluded Items # 17 and 18 on the parent involvement survey and Items # 19 and 20 on the school climate survey. These items were analyzed separately for the middle school sample. As can be seen from Table 3, a total of 420 teachers were used in the parent and school composites for questions one through three with a total mean of 50.96 (range= 36-62) for the parent involvement composite and 33.56 (range= 18-54) for the school climate composite. Nine elementary school cases and one middle school case were excluded from the parent involvement composite due to four or more answers left blank on the parent involvement survey. Three elementary and three middle school cases were excluded from the school climate composite due to

four or more answers left blank on the school climate survey. Because existing data was used for the elementary sample, Title I status and percent minority could not be determined for the elementary schools.

Table 3

*Results of the Composite Parent Involvement Survey*

<i>Composite P.I.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Elementary	243	50.91	4.48
Middle School	177	50.94	4.69
Total	420	50.92	4.56

*Notes.* P.I.= Parent involvement, SD= Standard deviation

Table 4

*Results of the Composite School Climate Survey*

<i>Composite S.C.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Elementary	249	32.43	7.41
Middle School	175	35.09	5.98
Total	424	33.53	6.97

*Notes.* S.C.= School climate, SD= Standard deviation

*Question 1.* Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of parental involvement at the elementary and middle school levels? To test for differences among



means, an univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed (see Table 5).

There was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of parental involvement at the elementary and middle school levels. There were no interaction effects. The response of the teachers at different school levels did not differ.

Table 5

*Results of ANOVA on Perceived Parent Involvement at Elementary and Middle School Levels*

Source	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	.002	.963
Within Groups	418	-	-
Total	419	-	-

*Question 1a.* At the middle schools, what percent variance is accounted for by school characteristics (% minority, Title I versus non-Title I)? Means, with all items by % minority and Title I status are presented in Table 6. To test for differences, an ANCOVA was performed (see Table 7). Percent minority did not account for the variability in parent involvement. There was an interaction effect between Title I status and percent minority. Title I status was a significant predictor. Title I status, percent

minority, and the interaction of Title I status and percent minority accounted for 5.3% of the variance. Title I school teachers also rated parent involvement lower.

Table 6

*Results for the Composite Parent Involvement Survey by Middle School Characteristics*

<i>Composite P.I.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<50% Minority	71	50.60	4.69
>50% Minority	106	51.16	4.70
Non-Title I	71	50.60	4.69
Title I	106	51.16	4.70
Total	177	50.94	4.69

*Notes.* P.I.= Parent involvement, SD= Standard deviation

Table 7

*ANCOVA on Percent Variance Accounted for by Middle School Characteristics*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Title I Status	1	9.163	.124	.003
Percent Minority	1	.036	-	.849

Table 7 Continued

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Title I Status X Percent Minority	1	6.697	.011	.010
Error	173	—	-	-

*Question 1b.* Do teacher age, gender, certification, ethnicity, years of experience, and school level affect elementary and middle school teachers' perception of parental involvement? A regression analysis was performed with the composite parental involvement (excluding Items # 17 and 18) as the dependent variable and school level, ethnicity of responder, age of responder, gender of responder, how certified, and number of years teaching as the predictors (see Table 8).

Table 8

*Regression Analysis for Age, Gender, Certification, Ethnicity, Years of Experience, and School Level as Predictor of Teacher Responses*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Age of Responder	.008	.037	.011
Gender of Responder	.468	.718	.035
How Certified	.216	.634	.020
Ethnicity of Responder	-.193	.186	-.054

Table 8 Continued

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
Number of Years Teaching	.034	.044	.068
School Level	.023	.517	.003

Looking at the regression model using age, gender, certification, years of experience, and school level, the model is not significant ( $p = .770$ ). There were no significant relationships identified between parent involvement and age of responder, gender of responder, how certified, ethnicity of responder, number of years teaching, and school level.

*Question 2.* Is there a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of school climate at the elementary and middle school levels? To test for differences across groups (elementary and middle school), an ANOVA was performed (see Table 9). There was a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of school climate at the elementary and middle school levels. Elementary school teachers rated school climate better.

Table 9

*ANOVA on Difference of Perceptions of School Climate Between Groups*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	1	15.450	<.001
Within Groups	422	-	-
Total	423	-	-

*Question 2a.* For the middle schools, what percent variance is accounted for by school characteristics (% minority, Title I versus non-Title I)? Means, with all items by % minority and Title I status are presented in Table 10. To test for differences, an ANCOVA was performed (see Table 11). There was no interaction effect between Title I status and percent minority.

Table 10

*Results for the Composite School Climate Survey by Middle School Characteristics*

<i>Composite S.C.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<50% Minority	71	32.78	5.44
>50% Minority	104	36.67	6.01

Table 10 Continued

<i>Composite S.C.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Non-Title I	71	32.78	5.44
Title I	104	36.67	6.01
Total	175	35.09	5.98

*Notes.* P.I.= Parent involvement, SD= Standard deviation

Table 11

*ANCOVA on Percent Variance Accounted for by Middle School Characteristics*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Title I Status	1	.482	.000	.489
Percent	1	.556	.007	.457
Minority				
Title I Status X	1	.156	.001	.693
Percent				
Minority				
Error	171	-	-	-

*Question 2b.* Do teacher age, gender, certification, ethnicity, years of experience, and school level affect elementary and middle school teachers' perception of parental involvement? A regression analysis was performed with the composite school climate (excluding Items # 19 and 20) as the dependent variable and school level, ethnicity of

responder, age of responder, gender of responder, how certified, and number of years teaching as the predictors (see Table 12).

Table 12

*Regression Analysis for Age, Gender, Certification, Ethnicity, Years of Experience, and School Level as Predictor of Teacher Responses*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
<b>Age of Responder</b>	.017	.055	.024
<b>Gender of Responder</b>	-.721	1.055	-.035
<b>How Certified</b>	-1.654	.931	-.099
<b>Ethnicity of Responder</b>	-.482	.274	-.089
<b>Number of Years Teaching</b>	-.141	.064	-.185*
<b>School Level</b>	2.569	.758	.182*

*Notes.* \* $p < .05$  for numbers of years teaching and school level

Based on the regression analysis, significance was found for number of years teaching ( $p=.028$ ) and school level ( $p=.001$ ). Number of years teaching and school level were found to predict teachers' perceptions of school climate. As the number of years teaching increases teachers' ratings of school climate decreases. It was also found that elementary school teachers rated school climate better than middle school teachers. There were no significant relationships identified between school climate and age of responder, gender of responder, how certified, and ethnicity of responder.

*Question 3.* Do teacher perceptions of school climate predict teacher perceptions of parental involvement? A regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between the independent variable of school climate and the dependent variable of parent involvement (see Table 13). It was found that teachers' perceptions of school climate do predict their perceptions of parent involvement ( $R^2=.073$ ). Teachers who rated school climate as positive also rated parent involvement as positive.

Table 13

*Regression Analysis for Prediction of School Climate and Parent Involvement*

<i>Variable</i>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>B</b>	<i>p</i>
<b>School Climate Composite</b>	-.177	.030	-.271	<.001

As noted previously, there were items added to both the Parent Involvement Survey and the School Climate Survey that were administered with the middle school sample. Items of interest and mean scores for the two surveys by subgroups are provided in Tables 14 and 15.



Table 14

*Results for the Parent Involvement Items (Mean, ( SD) by School Characteristics*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Item #15</i> (n=175)	<i>Item #16</i> (n=176)	<i>Item #17</i> (n=164)	<i>Item #18</i> (n=177)
<50% Minority	3.36 (0.64)	3.60 (0.52)	3.12 (0.66)	2.34 (0.96)
>50% Minority	3.28 (0.66)	3.56 (0.52)	3.16 (0.59)	2.31 (0.84)
Non-Title I	3.36 (0.64)	3.60 (0.52)	3.12 (0.66)	2.34 (0.96)
Title I	3.28 (0.66)	3.56 (0.52)	3.16 (0.59)	2.31 (0.84)
Total	3.30 (0.67)	3.58 (0.52)	3.14 (0.62)	2.31 (0.89)

Table 15

*Results for the School Climate Items (Mean, (SD) by School Characteristics*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Item #19</i> (n=175)	<i>Item #20</i> (n=175)
<50% Minority	1.39 (0.55)	3.92 (0.28)
>50% Minority	1.75 (0.50)	3.59 (0.53)

Table 15 Continued

<i>Source</i>	<i>Item #19</i>	<i>Item #20</i>
	(n=175)	(n=175)
Non-Title I	1.39	3.92
	(0.55)	(0.28)
Title I	1.75	3.59
	(0.50)	(0.53)
Total	1.63	3.72
	(0.54)	(0.48)

*Question 4.* Is there a significant difference between Title I and non-Title I middle school teachers for Item#16 “I am comfortable with meeting parents from ethnic groups different from my own.” A t-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups (Title I versus non-Title I) (see Table 16). There was no significant difference between Title I and non-Title I middle schools for Item# 16.

Table 16

*T-test on Item #16 of Parent Involvement Survey*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Item # 16	176	.594	.674

*Notes.* Item #16= I am comfortable with meeting parents from ethnic groups different from my own.

*Question 5.* Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ for Item#15 “Parent involvement is particularly important for students who are ethnically/culturally diverse.” A T-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups (Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools) (see Table 17). There was no significant difference between Title I and non-Title I middle schools for Item# 15.

Table 17

*T-test on Item #15 of Parent Involvement Survey*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Item # 15	176	.594	.553

*Notes.* Item #15= Parent involvement is particularly important for students who are ethnically/culturally diverse.

*Question #6.* Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ for Item # 17 on the parent involvement survey “Parent centers are important for getting parents involved at school?” A T-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups (Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools) for Item #17 (see Table 18). There was no difference between Title I and non-Title I middle school teachers for Item #17.

Table 18

*T-test on Item #17 of Parent Involvement Survey*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Item # 17	121.54	-1.03	.307

*Notes.* Item #17= Parent centers are important for getting parents involved at school.

*Question 7.* Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ for Item # 18 on the parent involvement survey “I often (at least 4 times a month) telephone, e-mail, or send a letter home to all of my students’ parents.” A T-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups (Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools) for Item #18 (see Table 19). There was no difference between Title I and non-Title I middle school teachers for Item #18.

Table 19

*T-test on Item #18 of Parent Involvement Survey*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Item # 18	155.22	-1.06	.293

*Notes.* Item #18= I often (at least 4 times a month) telephone, e-mail, or send a letter home to all of my students' parents.

*Question 8.* Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ for Item # 19 on the school climate survey "The physical environment of this school is conducive to students' learning." A T-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups (Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools) for Item #19 (see Table 20). There was no difference between Title I and non-Title I middle schools for Item #19.

Table 20

*T-test on Item #19 of School Climate Survey*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Item # 19	176	-.332	.740

*Notes.* Item #19= The physical environment of this school is conducive to students' learning.

*Question 9.* Do Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools differ for Item # 20 on the school climate survey “There are often broken windows or doors in this school.” A T-test was performed to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups (Title I middle schools versus non-Title I middle schools) for Item #20 (see Table 21). There was no significant difference between Title I middle schools and non-Title I middle schools for Item #20.

Table 21

*T-test on Item #20 of School Climate Survey*

<i>Source</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Item # 20	106.00	1.42	.158

*Notes.* Item #20= There are often broken windows or doors in this school.

### *Summary of Results*

Based on the responses by the teachers in this sample, no differences were found on how teachers perceived parent involvement at different school levels. There were no significant relationships identified between parent involvement and age of responder, gender of responder, ethnicity of responder, number of years teaching, and school level. There were significant differences between Title I and non-Title I teachers on how they rated parent involvement. Title I teachers rated parent involvement lower. Differences also were found on how teachers perceived school climate at different levels.

Elementary school teachers rated school climate better. Results also indicated that years of experience and school level predicted how teachers rated school climate. Teacher perceptions of school climate were found to predict teachers' perceptions of parent involvement. Teachers who rated school climate as positive also rated parent involvement as positive. There were no significant relationships identified between school climate and age of responder, gender of responder, how certified, and ethnicity of responder. There were no differences between Title I and non-Title I middle school teachers for Items #15 "Parent involvement is particularly important for students who are ethnically/culturally diverse", #16 "I am comfortable with meeting parents from ethnic groups different from my own", #20 "There are often broken windows or doors in this school", # 17 "Parent centers are important for getting parents involved", #18 "I often (at least 4 times a month) telephone, e-mail, or send a letter home to all of my students' parents, and #19 "The physical environment of this school is conducive to students' learning".

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Parent involvement is important across cultures and school levels. Children whose parents are actively involved in their education do better academically and socially. Furthermore, children whose parents are actively involved in their education have a higher rate of matriculation. It is important that schools collaborate with parents in order to facilitate a climate of cohesiveness.

The purpose of this study was to investigate any differences in the way that teachers respond to parent involvement and school climate. Existing data from four elementary sites that included 224 teachers and four middle schools with 178 middle school teachers in Texas were given a packet to complete that included a brief data questionnaire (See Appendix A), parent involvement survey (See Appendix B), and a school climate survey (See Appendix C). Six research questions were only given to the middle school sample and were not used with the elementary sample (Items #15, 16, 17, and 18 of the parent involvement survey; Items #19 and 20 of the school climate survey).

#### *Parent Involvement*

When parents are actively involved in their children's education at school and at home, students do better in school. Parent involvement is critical to helping children succeed regardless of grade level. A home environment where learning is promoted is a better predictor of academic success than income or cultural background. Reading aloud to children helps them to become better readers in school. Children perform better when



parents talk to them about school on a daily basis. In addition to reading books and talking to their children about school, parents can organize and manage their children's time spent doing academics in the home setting. Parent involvement in the home and school setting has showed improved achievement, absenteeism, behavior, and self-confidence.

Parent involvement drops off significantly after elementary school. Students whose parents stay involved in their schooling do better academically and socially. Transitioning from elementary to middle school can be hard for some children. Without parent support at home and school, children may be at a risk for dropping out of school. Literature shows that minority children are at an even greater risk of dropping out. Obstacles that may prevent parents from becoming involved at the secondary level include: (a) not knowing how to be involved, (b) parents feel schoolwork is beyond their knowledge, and (c) previous negative school experiences. Schools can increase parent involvement by sending positive notes home, phone calls, and home visits.

The current research focused on obtaining teachers' perceptions of parent involvement at the elementary and middle school levels. It was hypothesized that there would not be a significant difference between elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of parent involvement; in fact, the results indicated that there was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of parental involvement at the elementary and middle school levels. Because parental involvement may be more of an issue in low income areas with high minority populations, the Title I status and the interaction between Title I status and percent minority was accounted for by school characteristics

(% minority, Title I versus non-Title I). It was hypothesized that Title I middle schools with higher percent minority students would have lower ratings of parent involvement. The results indicated that percent minority did not account for the variability in parent involvement; however, Title I status was a significant predictor and it accounted for 5.3% of the variance. Title I schools rated parent involvement lower. It was also of interest to determine the extent to which teacher age, gender, certification, ethnicity, years of experience, and school level affect teachers' perceptions of parental involvement. It was hypothesized that older, female, traditionally certified, more than five years of experience middle school teachers would rate parent involvement lower. The results indicated that there were no significant relationships identified between parent involvement and age of responder, gender of responder, how certified, ethnicity of responder, number of years teaching, and school level.

#### *School Climate*

Parent involvement is important to children's success. However, parents may not become involved in their children's education if schools do not have a positive school climate. Schools that create a positive school climate by reaching out to parents in turn create an atmosphere where parents want to be involved. When schools encourage parents to become involved, parents' perceptions of schools improve. Schools can improve their school climate by facilitating positive home-to-school communication. When teachers send correspondence home about classroom activities and strategies for assisting children at home, parents are more likely to volunteer at school. Teachers create an atmosphere of partnership when they communicate with parents. Teachers also

create an atmosphere of collaboration when they show enthusiasm towards working with students and parents from different cultures.

The current research focused on teachers' perceptions of school climate at the elementary and middle school levels. It was hypothesized that there would not be a significant difference between elementary and middle school teachers' perceptions of school climate; the results indicated that there was a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of school climate at the elementary and middle school levels. Elementary school teachers rated school climate higher. To further examine the context for school climate at the middle school, the percent variance accounted for by school characteristics (% minority, Title I versus non-Title I) was examined. It was hypothesized that Title I middle schools and schools with higher percent minority students would have lower ratings of school climate; however, the results indicated that there was no interaction effect between Title I status and percent minority. With regard to teacher characteristics, it was hypothesized that older, female, traditionally certified, more than five years of experience middle school teachers would rate school climate better. The results indicated that years of experience and school level were significant predictors of how teachers rated school climate. As the number of years teaching increased; teachers' ratings of school climate decreased. It also was found that elementary school teachers rated school climate better than middle school teachers.

Because there is believed to be a connection between teacher perceptions of school climate and perceptions of parent involvement, an additional analysis was conducted. It was hypothesized that teachers who believe that their school climate was

positive would also rate parent involvement as positive; the results indicated that, in fact, teachers' perceptions of school climate predicted their perceptions of parent involvement. Teachers who rated parent involvement positively also rated school climate positively.

Questions 4 through 9 addressed item level responses to determine if there were significant differences between Title I middle school teachers and non-Title I middle school teachers on these items. Although differences were anticipated, they did not emerge with this sample.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

Although the findings of this study are promising; they also are limited in some ways. The middle schools used in this study were limited to certain suburban regions in Texas. These results may only generalize to schools with similar demographics. The gender of the respondents was predominately female. In fact, only a small percentage of male teachers responded to the surveys. The small sample of males used in this research may make it hard for this study to generalize to schools with higher percentages of males. Efforts were made to obtain data from additional schools with male teachers, but those schools did not participate in the study. Secondly, the teachers used in this study came from suburban school districts. Suburban schools may not have broken windows and doors that are frequently seen in low-income urban districts. The study itself may be limited due to its' analog design. An analog study which included surveys was used to describe teachers' perception of school climate and parent involvement. The disadvantages of this would be limited to items checked off by teachers. There was no

face-to-face interaction between the researcher and teachers. The advantage to using an analog study was that the researcher was able to use a larger number of teachers as opposed to using a quantitative method. Finally, this study did not use input from parents. It would have been useful to see how parents rated school climate and parent involvement at the middle school level.

### *Implications for Practice*

The current results are encouraging for practitioners in that the results indicate that middle school and elementary teachers report similar perceptions of parent involvement. Overall, both elementary and middle school teachers had a positive view of parent involvement. Thus, practitioners may be able to use similar procedures for getting parents involved at different school levels. School psychologists can assist teachers at the elementary and middle school level similarly when trying to assist them with getting parents involved and for creating school-wide parent participation. School psychologists can assist schools with creating parent centers that emphasizes positive home-school relationships. School psychologists also can assist schools with developing positive school environments for parents by serving on school leadership teams.

Since years of experience predicted how teachers rated school climate, school psychologists may want to assist teachers with fewer years of teaching experience with developing a more positive view of school climate. Furthermore, since elementary school teachers rated school climate better than middle school teachers, school psychologists may want to work with middle schools to assist them with developing a

more positive school climate. School psychologists can do this by working collaboratively with school administrators.

#### *Future Research Directions*

While the current study assists in understanding how teachers view parent involvement and school climate, further research is needed in this area. These results suggest that teachers with more experience view their school climate positively, therefore, further research is needed to explore why teachers with less experience have negative school climate experiences. Research also suggested that elementary school teachers rate school climate better; further qualitative research is needed to explore the differences between elementary and middle school teachers. Parent involvement and school climate were linked in that the more positively teachers rated parent involvement, the more positively they rated school climate. This interaction would seem to warrant additional research to see why negative perceptions of parent involvement lead to negative perceptions of school climate. Qualitative research could be conducted to further evaluate positive correlations between the two variables. Since Title I status and its' interaction with percent minority was a significant predictor of how teachers rated parent involvement, this area would benefit from further research. Lastly, since this research only used teachers' perceptions of school climate and parent involvement, it would be useful to include parents' perceptions in future research.

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7. If a teacher, were you certified through the traditional route (Education Degree)?  
\_\_\_\_\_ or through an alternative certification program? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Age \_\_\_\_\_ years
9. Number of years you have been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How would you describe your level of *experience* in working with children from diverse cultures? (check one)  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have minimal to no experience working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have some experience working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have much experience working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have extensive experience working with children from diverse cultures
11. How would you describe your level of *training* in working with children from diverse cultures? (check one)  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have minimal to no training working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have some experience training with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have much training working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have extensive training working with children from diverse cultures
12. How would you describe your level of *experience* in working with children with special needs (e.g., behavioral or emotional problems, ADHD, learning problems, etc.)? (check one)  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have minimal to no experience working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have some experience working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have much experience working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have extensive experience working with children from diverse cultures
13. How would you describe your level of *training* with special needs (e.g., behavioral or emotional problems, ADHD, learning problems, etc.)? (check one)  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have had minimal to no training working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have some training working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have much training working with children from diverse cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ I have extensive training working with children from diverse cultures

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE!!!!**

## APPENDIX B

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Using the 4-point scale, please indicate your agreement with the following items:

**1. I feel comfortable when parents make a scheduled visit to my classroom.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**2. I feel comfortable when parents make an unscheduled visit to my classroom.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**3. I have invited parents to my classroom to observe my teaching.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**4. I prefer parents to visit only during certain times of the day.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**5. I feel comfortable with parent volunteers assisting me in my classroom.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**6. I feel comfortable speaking to all of my students' parents via telephone.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**7. I feel that the majority of my students' parents show up for school events.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**8. I think that my school has done all it can do to get parents to participate.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**9. Parent involvement can help teachers be more effective with their students.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**10. Parent involvement is important for a good school.**



1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**11. If my students' parents try really hard, they can help their children learn even when the children are unmotivated.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**12. I can do a good job of teaching my students even if some parents are not involved.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**13. Parent involvement is important for effective discipline.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**14. Parent involvement is important for student learning.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**15. Parent involvement is particularly important for students who are ethnically/culturally diverse.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**16. I am comfortable with meeting parents from ethnic groups different from my own.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**17. Parent Centers are important for getting parents involved at school.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

**18. I often (at least 4 times a month) telephone, e-mail, or send a letter home to all of my students' parents.**

1=Strongly Disagree    2=Disagree    3=Agree    4=Strongly Agree

Any additional comments you would like to share on your perceptions of parent involvement:

## APPENDIX C

**SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY**

This survey asks you to tell us about your school environment. For every statement below, please let us know whether you “Agree Strongly,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” or “Disagree Strongly.” *Circle* the response that **best describes how you feel about your school** using the following scale:

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**1. Teachers take students concerns seriously.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**2. Classroom rules are enforced fairly by most of the teachers.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**3. Teacher’s decisions as a professional are supported by the campus administrator(s).**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**4. Teachers respect parents.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**5. The morale of the staff is generally high.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**6. Teachers do not spend too much time disciplining students.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**7. Students are respectful of the teachers.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**8. Students cooperate with one another at school.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**9. In this school, students feel safe in their environment.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**10. There are not a lot of fights among students in our school.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**11. Overall, students are well behaved in this school.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**12. Our school staff believes that all students can attain mastery of academic skills.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**13. Students from different backgrounds and cultures respect each other at school.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**14. The school has or participates in different cultural activities, such as special food, music, customs, or celebrations.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**15. Teachers reflect the diversity of students in the school.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**16. Our school has positive relations with parents.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**17. The community supports the school.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**18. The general school environment is conducive to learning.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**19. The physical environment of this school is conducive to students learning.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

**20. There are often broken windows or doors in this school.**

1=Agree Strongly      2=Somewhat Agree      3=Somewhat Disagree      4=Disagree Strongly

Any additional comments you would like to share on your perceptions of the school environment:

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